

A LITTLE SOMETHING

I once spent five days in a tiny village. It was in Shikoku. The women and girls were practicing a festival dance in the school gymnasium. They would go over it, the youngest and the oldest, night after night. I'd watch Harue, a five-year-old, faithfully mimic the dance motions of her grandmother, who was doing the same mimicking when she was five. A scratchy old record provided the tune. There were frogs croaking out all the windows. I walked the next day with Harue, she showed me how you net a cicada, settle the fellow comfortably in his cage, chat with him, study his carapace, admire the funny noise he makes, and let him go. That's all. A little girl showing me how she lets cicadas go.

HAIKU

Always pegged as one
more deaf Yankee on their bus:
"His shoes look like ships!"

THE DOUBLE WHAMMY

One of my English students in Japan -- she'd wear this terrific pair of checked slacks I can still see -- asked me to a movie the night after our last class. You can imagine my surprise when I realized what we had tickets for was *The Story of O*. Immediately after the film ended, Kyoko disappointed me by excusing herself; next day she had to be up at five. That weekend, out of the blue, I got a call at home from Kyoko. Her sister and her sister's boyfriend were with her, they were in my part of town, did I feel like getting together. You bet. Imagine my surprise on meeting them: Kyoko and her sister turned out to be identical twins, with only one bulgingly visible difference.... And the bulgingly visible difference was delivered the next day, kicking and screaming, a week premature.... So imagine the two women standing before my eyes. And imagine my surprise.